

Ethics Impact on Employees Participating in NRCS Programs
Chief's Executive Team Meeting, April 17, 2003

A district conservationist, soil conservationist, soil con technician, etc. who applies to participate in an NRCS program (EQIP, WRP, etc.) must not work on the applications of competing applicants, or his/her own.

Example:

If Jones, a DC, signs up for EQIP in Carroll County, then Jones can not work on any applications for that same program with which Jones is competing for program dollars in Carroll County.

What you should do:

1. Insure all employees understand this.
2. Insure supervisors understand that dc's, soil cons, and soil con techs, etc. who apply to participate in an NRCS program must not be allowed to work on either their own application or the application of a competing landowner [i.e., for the same program sign-up, in the same county].
3. Instruct supervisors to immediately inform the state office of situations in which an employee applies or plans to apply to participate in an NRCS program in the same county served by the field office in which he or she works.
4. Notify* Dwight Holman, Deputy Chief for Management, of:
 - a) Any situation that adversely affects your ability to accomplish our mission because another employee cannot be readily assigned to process applications for the disqualified employee.
 - b) Any situation(s) where an employee, who owns land in the same county served by his/her own field office, will not be able to perform the significant duties of his/her position if they apply for participation.

* Note: State and regional ethics advisors should work with state and regional conservationists to ensure submissions are written to adequately address the requirements at 5 CFR 2635.403(b) for an *agency determination of substantial conflict*. Inadequate requests should be stopped at the regional level and either corrected to be sufficient or returned by the regional conservationist to the initiating state conservationist with explanation.